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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Rumania

REPORT NO.

SUBJECT Trouble on the Danube-Black Sea Canal
25X1A

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(BY SOURCE)

DATE ACQUIRED
(BY SOURCE)

DATE (OF INFO.) 17 Dec 53

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CD NO.	
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DAS NO.	
OCI NO.	

DATE DISTR. 25 Feb 1954

NO. OF PAGES 2

NO. OF ENCLS.

SUPP. TO
REPORT NO.

25X1X

1. Czechoslovak and Hungarian experts have been talking about the visit of certain Swiss experts to the Danube-Black Sea Canal, on invitation of the Soviet authorities. The Swiss engineers came to study the question whether it was desirable to continue work on the great canal project, the purpose of which is to provide for the vital interests of general Soviet strategy--that is, to make it possible for Soviet vessels of more than 15,000 tons to pass up the Danube, into the very heart of the Balkans.
2. The report of the Swiss experts was disturbing to Soviet authorities. It indicated that the terrain staked out for the canal was, in fact, wholly unsuitable for such a purpose. Thereupon, Moscow sent orders to the "Council for Mutual Economic Assistance" to refuse further aid for canal construction. The net result was a kind of silent abandonment of the canal project. The Danube-Black Sea Canal has not been given up--officially. But the work is yielding, bit by bit, to a creeping paralysis.
3. There is no doubt that it is rough terrain, consisting mostly of the rock of the Dobruja. It is not surprising that the workers show little enthusiasm and proceed slowly; for the job has always been called Death Canal by the men who actually do the work. Furthermore, the five-year contract period will soon have expired. But none of these facts really explain the sudden abandonment of the canal project by the Soviets, nor the summary condemnation of certain engineers. Neither does it explain why the great majority of the forced laborers on the canal have now been taken to Aiud, which thus becomes a "prison-city type."

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4. Together with the Danube-Black Sea Canal, the Soviets are also losing enthusiasm for, or even forgetting, the great Hydro-Centrals, which were to be created at Ovidiu I, Ovidiu II, and Poarta-Alba. It is odd that this indifference to the great Soviet projects in Rumania coincides with work on the Turkmen Canal and other engineering projects of the same sort.
5. Rumanian political observers see in all this a sudden about-face in the Moscow Politburo's policy, following the death of Stalin--an abandonment of gigantic plans to "transform Nature," in favor of "the Creation of Soviet Man."
6. Practical experience on the canal demonstrates the falsity of Soviet propaganda about the excellence of Soviet machinery, "machinery unique in the world." Experts have seen Soviet machines, including Soviet tractors, swiftly turn to scrap iron because of their inferior quality. Furthermore, Prague and Csepel machinery, repainted and given Soviet labels, constitute part of the materiel "sent" from the Soviet Union. The real Soviet excavating machines, with long arms, showed themselves helpless before Dobruja granite. Electric drills and dynamite had to be used. Eventually, the German Henschel factories sent some excavating machines that really could be used, to promote the "victory of Socialist construction." The entire propaganda regarding the superiority of Soviet machinery has turned out to be merely one enormous bluff, so far as anything sent to the Danube-Black Sea Canal is concerned.
7. Experience with scientific theoretical work for the canal indicates further Soviet falsification, regarding the copyright of the American, British, French, and German scientific books used. These were adapted or translated into the Russian language. The translators then claimed the ideas and discoveries in these books as their own progeny.
8. These translations and adaptations were, in fact, made by the Administration and Surveillance Section. The secretariat of this section has a special translation bureau, which often has employed Rumanians qualified in the appropriate languages.
9. In view of all this, and especially in view of Moscow's changed policy, it is now extremely indiscreet to say anything about the Danube-Black Sea Canal, anywhere in Rumania.

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